

CARDIAC ARREST

I was doing all right, thanks,
Until you charged along,
Playing your heartless detective games,
Making the arrest when my pants were down,
Accusing me of what you called "contrived randomness."

And how you gloated in your pants
When you proved
That my Forms in Japan book
Was deliberately
Left open to page 51
And placed at precisely
A 42 degree angle
On a trunk which only looked old,
But was not,
That my denim jeans were the consequence
Of bleach and number 36 sandpaper,
And that the single lemon
On my cutting block
Was not, in fact, to be cut,
But only there to match
The yellow daffodil in the window.

But it's my gift of metaphor, I pleaded,
Hoping you'd have a change of heart,
But no, there was your righteous warrant,
The indecent exposure at the heart
Of what makes me tick,
Regulated by no pacemaker,
But surer than any liable lemon.

WATERLOO AT LITHIA SPRINGS

The plaza, they call it in Ashland, Oregon,
And the station wagon tourists have come here
With hopes of making a memory to take back home,
Lining up to taste the Lithia Springs mineral water,
Never knowing they are drinking this town's history,
Never knowing there were once dreams
To make this town a health spa,
"The Saratoga of the West."

"Ashland grows while Lithia flows"
Was the spring fever slogan
Which spawned 100-acre Lithia Park
Designed by John McLaren of Golden Gate Park fame,

And the extravagant Lithia Springs Hotel,
Once the tallest building for 700 miles
Between San Francisco and Portland.

But the spa never happened,
The park and renamed hotel
Have faded from former glory,
And in the winter, the plaza is deserted.

But come summer, there are the tourists,
Cowlicked siblings pushing, giggling,
Rattling impatient potato chip bags,
Hesitant parents sharing
Screwed-up faces and babble
As they experience the water:
"Oh, our Aunt Emma swears by this stuff.
We found out last week she doesn't have cancer
And we're all just tickled about that.
Oh Johnny, stop shoving your sister
And get back in the car.
It's time to go."

And if they hurry,
There may be enough time left today
To make still another vacation memory
Somewhere on down the road.

-- Michael Anderson

Ashland OR

ROY

It was the saturday before christmas with the hot black-smiths working overtime, ringing the bells of parrots in the mile high gums. The car climbed round the narrow bitumen and through the rusty tunnels of breadboxes and mail boxes, with the airmail greetings handled three days ago by the cold-handed, blue-faced mail sorters in fox-shouldered London.

I stopped at the CHANNON STORE, the petrol pumper was a quiet farmer and the storekeeper wasn't much more active. He went to fetch the cold beer from out back, I looked around the store and up at the black saddle riding the metal bracket from the wall. It was cheap. For a black saddle it was very cheap. Near the door a motor in a wire cage shook the worn boards and rocked the baby food on the curved shelves. There was a lot of second-hand